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The Romance Hunters

A Comedy in Three Acts

BY
ELIZABETH GALE

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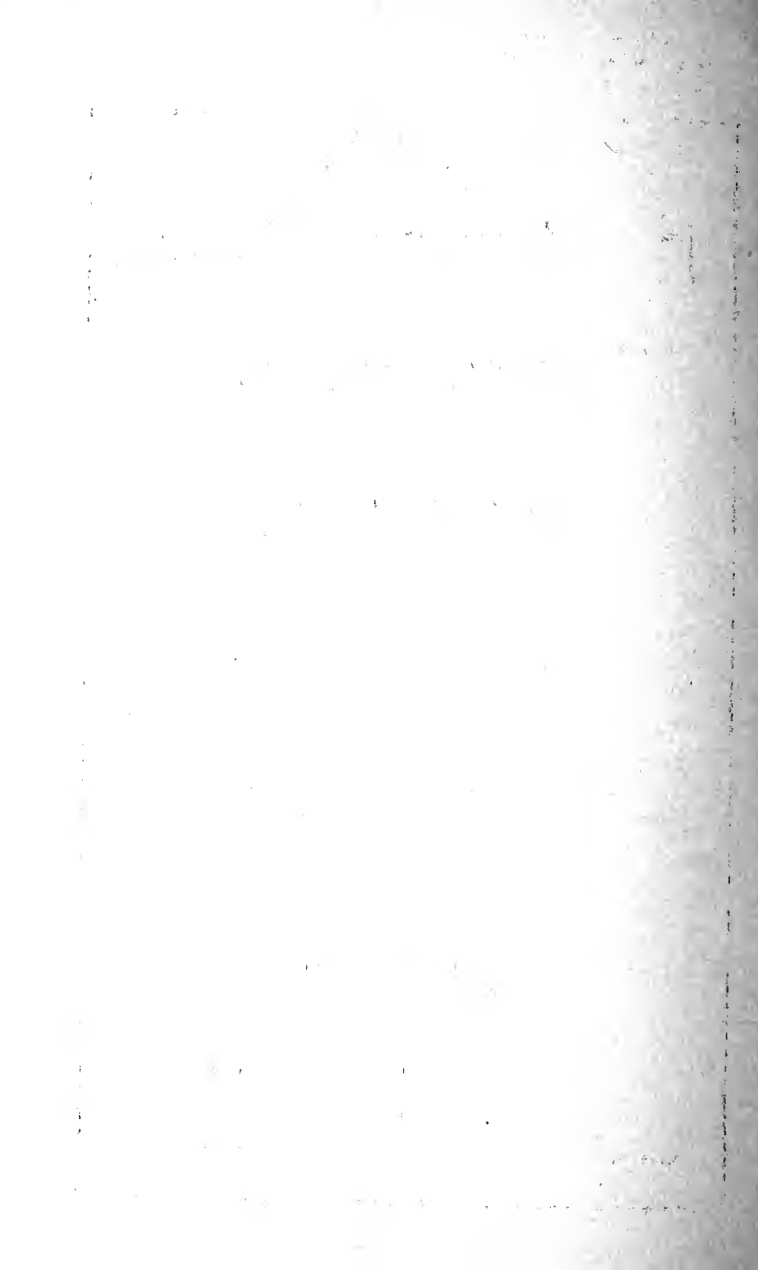
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THE ROMANCE HUNTERS.

CHARACTERS.

AMANDA ARMEN.....*Who has social ambitions*
MARGARET BERRY.....*Her niece*
SUSAN WILLIAMS.....*MARGARET'S friend*
NANCY REED..*Another old schoolmate, romantically*
inclined
KEZIA VREELAND.....*Who "likes to be on hand"*
MRS. BERDAN.....*Who always is on hand*
LIZA STEUBBIN.....*The village gossip*
CINDY BROWN.....*AMANDA'S colored maid*
ENOCH WESTERVELT..*Who hopes to marry AMANDA*
JIM HARRISON....*Who hopes to marry MARGARET*
HOWARD VANTER.....*Who also hopes to marry*
MARGARET
HEN BUSH.....*Who hopes to marry NANCY*
CLEM WICKS..*Who suffers from a sense of humor*
RUFUS GREEN.....*CINDY'S beau*

THE ROMANCE HUNTERS.

SYNOPSIS.

Amanda Armen, a romantic, novel-reading spinster, plans to give her niece, Margaret, what she herself has always wished for and never had—the chance to marry a lord. They are about to start on a trip to Europe in quest of lords and ladies when Howard Vanter, who wishes to marry Margaret himself, induces Clem Wicks to pose as his cousin, Sir Clement Blackwell, in the hope of winning Amanda's favor because of this noble connection. Amanda, glad to enjoy home and "high society" at the same time, gives up all thought of the European trip and begins at once a lively round of entertainments in honor of the supposed lord.

In the meantime someone has stolen Enoch Westervelt's money and suspicion rests upon Jim Harrison, Margaret's lover, who is away on business. But finally Jim returns, the real culprit is discovered, Clem, ashamed of the part he has played, confesses that he is plain *Mr.* Wicks and the romance hunt ends, like most good things, at home.

The Romance Hunters

SCENE:—AMANDA ARMEN'S garden. *A strawberry festival is in progress and off to the left, out of sight behind the shrubbery, the people who have already come can be heard laughing and talking as they gather about the table. Well forward on the left AMANDA sits on a rustic bench before a small table on which is a money-box and a pile of tickets. Just now, while there is a lull in the ticket selling, she is intensely interested in a paper-covered novel. She is dressed in the latest style with a few more ruffles and bows than she needs but her hair is drawn back tightly and twisted into a snug, neat little knot on the top of her head.*

VOICE. (*From behind the shrubbery*) Jimminy spruce! Where are those berries!

ANOTHER VOICE. There a'comin'. There a'comin'.

FIRST VOICE. So is day after to-morrow. (*Laughter*)

AMANDA. (*Excited over her book and oblivious to her surroundings*) My land o' Goshen! She'll never get out of this fix!

(*Enter CINDY from left. She has a very airy manner and wears a brilliant red dress, white cap and apron very stiffly starched but very much awry.*)

CINDY. Rufus! Rufus Green! Yo' good fo' nothin' black trash! Where yo' all hidin' to?

(Enter RUFUS from right. He is a very stout darky and is dressed for the occasion in clean blue overalls and a short white coat. On his arm he carries a basket, and in his hand a big straw hat which he uses for a fan.)

RUFUS. *(Coming in)* I'se yhere. I'se yhere, Cindy. Now don' git flusterated.

CINDY. *(Severely)* Flusterated! Yo' all'd flusterate and flabbergastify anybody I ever heard about. *(Starting toward him with a threatening gesture)* Now yo' git along dere wid dem berries. How long yo' reckon folks is goin' to wait? *(Disparingly as RUFUS starts slowly to the left)* Sakes to gracious! Yo' walk like your feet was bashful, yo' do. *(Following him up with vigorous gestures)* Shoo! Git along wid yo'!

RUFUS. *(Stopping, pleadingly)* Now, Cindy, don' git raspy. I'se willin' if I ain't quick.

CINDY. Well de folks is willin' an' dey'll be quick too, to eat dem berries yo' got. *(Snapping her fingers)* Now yo' step in dere right lively.

RUFUS. *(Shambling off)* Yas'm, I'se gwine to, I'se gwine, Cindy. *(Exit RUFUS at left)*

CINDY. *(Clasping her hands in dismay)* Sech a tangle foot! An' he's de only beau I got!

AMANDA. *(Looking up from her book)* Oh, Cindy.

CINDY. *(Coming down quickly)* Say, how far did yo' git? *(Pointing to the book)* Am she married yet?

AMANDA. *(Patting the book affectionately)* Oh, no. They are having a terrible time. Somebody's locked up in the tower room, but I can't find out who.

CINDY. (*Trying to get the book*) My land o' cotton! Just lemme read one page!

AMANDA. (*Putting the book on the bench beside her*) Not until your work is finished. (*Enter MARGARET from down right. She is an attractive young girl and wears a simple but pretty light summer frock*) Sakes' alive, child! Whatever made you so late?

MARGARET. (*Coming over to the table*) Oh, Auntie, I have been talking to Liza Stuebbin. She called and——

AMANDA. Ain't she comin' to the strawberry festival? (*CINDY steals up behind AMANDA, reaches over and gets the book and reads with wild but silent symptoms of delight*)

MARGARET. Oh, yes, she is coming, but she will be late because she is going to the store first. (*Sits in chair beside the table*) And it took her all this time to tell me about it.

AMANDA. Yes, yes, Liza is a great talker, and you just bein' home from college and all I suppose she had a lot to say.

(*Enter NANCY and SUSAN from down right.*

NANCY is a gay little thing, very fussily dressed, but SUSAN is the strong, practical type of country girl and wears plain but becoming clothes.)

SUSAN. Good-afternoon!

NANCY. Hello, people!

AMANDA. How d'y do, girls.

MARGARET. (*Rising and going to meet them*) Hello!

NANCY. (*Running forward waving a paper-covered novel*) I have finished it! Oh, Miss Armen, it was great! *Lady Wixton's Revenge*—have you read it, Margaret?

MARGARET. (*Laughing*) No, I haven't had time. (*Going to her*) I am so glad to see you, Susan!

SUSAN. (*Giving her a hearty embrace*) I am certainly glad to see you. And now I hope you will stay with us for a while.

(*Exit CINDY at rear, reading greedily.*)

AMANDA. She is going to stay with me at any rate, but I guess she will have to leave the rest of you.

MARGARET.	}	(<i>Eagerly crowding about</i> AMANDA) Why, what do you mean?
SUSAN.		
NANCY.		

AMANDA. I mean that it is time to carry out the plans I made ten years ago when Margaret came to live with me. I made up my mind then that she was goin' to have all the education she needed, and then she was goin' to have some romance in her life. Romance, says I, is the icin' to the cake and I never could abide a cake without icin'. I never had any romance myself, except in novels, but I am goin' to see Margaret have some, so just as soon as we can get things fixed we are goin' to start for Europe.

MARGARET.	}	Europe!
SUSAN.		
NANCY.		

SUSAN. What in the world are you going to Europe for? (*She sits in chair beside the table*)

AMANDA. For romance, I tell you. I——

MARGARET. But, Auntie, you need not take such a long journey just for that. I have found all of the romance I want right here. (*She is standing behind the table*)

AMANDA. Hey? What?

MARGARET. I am going to marry Jim.

AMANDA. }

SUSAN. } Jim Harrison?

NANCY. }

MARGARET. Yes, Jim Harrison. But please don't say anything about it yet, because you see, I am not really engaged to him.

SUSAN. }

NANCY. } Not engaged to him!

AMANDA. I should hope not!

SUSAN. If you are not engaged to him why do you say you are going to marry him?

NANCY. For goodness' sake, Margaret, you are not going to propose to him yourself, are you? (*She sits beside AMANDA*)

MARGARET. (*Laughing*) Oh, no. It is not quite as bad as that. I meant to say nothing about it for the present, but in view of Auntie's European scheme I think perhaps it will be best to tell the whole story. You know Jim and I have always been good friends. We were great chums at school and while I was away at college we wrote to each other, and he came up to see me when he could. And not so very long ago he told me that as soon as his business was a little more promising he was going to ask me to marry him. But he wouldn't let me say anything—he wouldn't let me be engaged to him because he said he wanted me to be perfectly free. But of course I know just what I am going to do when the time comes.—So you see, Auntie, I have all the romance I need.

SUSAN. (*Taking MARGARET'S hand affectionately*) Oh, good!

AMANDA. (*Who has shown growing signs of distress as MARGARET talked*) Humph! I've had that kind too. But do you call *that* romance? Lawsy me! After all the education I've given you!

MARGARET. Auntie, if you hunted the world over you couldn't find a better man than Jim.

SUSAN. (*Rising*) Indeed you couldn't.

AMANDA. (*Sharply*) Sakes' alive! Can't you look any higher than that? His grandfather was a blacksmith!

SUSAN. A very good blacksmith, Miss Armen. (*She walks off to center*)

AMANDA. (*Dispairingly*) My land o' Goshen! can't I make you understand! Can't I make you see how it is! (*Rising*) Lords and ladies, dukes and grandeur, that's romance! Balls, theaters, teas and flowers and all that sort of thing—that's what I want you to have. Party dresses at the supper table and everybody sayin' *My lord* and *my lady*. That's what I'm plannin' for you. Why it seems to me, if I could just say once, *Good-morning, Sir Reginald!* I'd feel the thrill of it forever. (*Turning to MARGARET*) And if you should marry one! Sakes' alive! I guess I'd never stop shoutin' for joy.

NANCY. (*Who has been listening eagerly to AMANDA*) Oh, I wish I were in Margaret's place!

AMANDA. (*To NANCY, hopefully*) Did any heroine you ever read about in a novel ever marry into a blacksmith's family?

NANCY. (*Shaking her head emphatically*) Oh, no, never.

AMANDA. (*Triumphantly*) Of course not.

MARGARET. (*Coming around in front of the table*) But I am not living in a novel, Auntie, I am living right here with you.

AMANDA. (*Pleadingly*) Now, Margaret, don't be *balky*. Ever since you was born I have been savin' and plannin' and managin' so that I could give you what I have always wanted myself, now can't you do just this one little thing for me?

MARGARET. (*Leaning dejectedly against the*

table) It isn't a little thing, Auntie. I don't see how I could give up Jim.

AMANDA. It wouldn't be givin' him up. You say yourself you ain't engaged. (*She sits on the bench again*)

MARGARET. But, Auntie——

AMANDA. Now listen. You just come along with me and we'll get into high society. That's all I ask—come along and be pleasant. I don't need any other promise. When you get up among the lords and ladies I know you won't want to come down again. Will she, Nancy?

NANCY. (*Sighing*) I shouldn't think so. I wouldn't.

SUSAN. (*Coming to MARGARET'S side*) You might try it, Margaret.

MARGARET. (*Doubtfully*) How long will it take?

AMANDA. Well, if we go kinder easy, I've got money to last a year, but if we splurge pretty much we'll have to come home in six months.

NANCY. (*Jumping up*) I'd like to splurge! (*She walks excitedly to right*)

MARGARET. And when the time is up, if I still prefer Jim——

AMANDA. I'll never say a word against it. All I want is to give you a chance to do better.

MARGARET. (*Sighing*) Very well, then, I'll go.

AMANDA. (*Giving her a joyous hug*) My, I'm so happy!

(*Enter ENOCH WESTERVELT and HEN BUSH from down right. ENOCH is a good-natured man, inclined to be plump and already quite gray. He is dressed in a linen suit and carries a blue cotton handkerchief carelessly in his hand. HEN is a good looking, jolly village boy, dressed, not carefully, in his Sunday best.*)

ENOCH. (*Coming in*) Hello, hello, there!

HEN. Howd'y do!

AMANDA. How'y do, Enoch! How are you, Hen?

MARGARET. Good-afternoon, Mr. Westervelt. Howd'y do, Hen!

SUSAN. Hello! How are you?

NANCY. (*Going to them*) You are late.

ENOCH. (*Crossing to table*) We're just in time to treat the girls. Gimme six tickets, Mandy.

HEN. (*Stepping ahead of him*) Oh, no, you don't! Gimme two, Miss Armen. Nancy, you are goin' to have some cream with me.

NANCY. (*Demurely*) Oh, thank you. (*She follows HEN to the table*)

(*Enter HOWARD VANTER from down right. He is trim and slender and looks very spick and span in his white flannel suit. He is quick and alert in his manner and pulls nervously at his slight moustache while he talks.*)

ENOCH. Gimme four then, Mandy. I'll take the rest of you in.

HOWARD. (*Crossing to table*) Oh, no. Please don't. Let me take Miss Margaret in. Good-afternoon! How are you all?

THE OTHERS. Howard Vanter!

AMANDA. Well, of all things! I thought you was goin' to live in the city for good!

HOWARD. I tried to but I couldn't. You see I have too many good friends here in Reedville.

NANCY. (*Delighted*) So you are going to spend the summer here?

HOWARD. I hope to.

SUSAN. (*Cordially*) Fine!

HOWARD. (*To MARGARET*) And are you not glad that I am going to be here?

MARGARET. I am glad you are here now, Howard, but I will not be here myself this summer——

NANCY. (*Excitedly, going to HOWARD*) She is going to Europe! Think of it! And she is going to meet all sorts of lords and ladies and have a grand time, and it is going to be just like a story book!

HOWARD. Really!

ENOCH. You don't mean it!

MARGARET. I am afraid it is true.

AMANDA. (*Rising and coming from behind the table with tickets and money box*) I've just been tellin' 'em about it and I'll tell it all to you while we eat our cream.

(AMANDA, MARGARET, SUSAN, HOWARD and ENOCH go up left.)

ENOCH. (*As he follows AMANDA*) Well, I snun! Europe!

HEN. It is a long walk back home!

NANCY. (*Lingering at the table*) I wish I were going!

HEN. (*Tucking her hand under his arm*) I'm glad you ain't.

(*They join the others.*)

AMANDA. (*As she goes off at left*) We are going to start just as soon as I can get ready and we'll stay maybe a year, and then——

(*As they all disappear behind the shrubbery CINDY comes down from rear absorbed in her book.*)

CINDY. (*Her eyes bulging with excitement as she comes down*) My land o' cotton! He's gwine

to git her dis time sho'. (*Reading*) It was a pitch dark night as the lubbly heroine stepped out into de garden. She felt a hot breath on her cheek, she——

(*Enter JIM briskly from down right. He is a well built, frank, pleasant young man and is dressed now for traveling.*)

JIM. (*Coming in*) Hello, Cindy!

CINDY. (*Nearly falling over in her fright*) *Whow-w!* Lor' sakes, Marse Jim! I don thought de villyan had me dat time fo' sho'.

JIM. (*Laughing*) I am sorry I frightened you. But where is Margaret? (*Starting to left*) Out here, I suppose.

AMANDA. (*From behind shrubbery at left*) Cindy! Cindy Brown!

CINDY. (*Running about in alarm*) My land o' cotton! Where'll I put it? (*She throws the book down on the bench at left and assumes a very meek and pious air as AMANDA enters*) Yas'm, Miss Manyd, I'se yhere.

AMANDA. Well, you ought to be out there waiting on the table.

CINDY. (*Hastily*) Yas'm, I'se agwine! (*Exit quickly at left*)

JIM. (*Going to AMANDA*) How do you do, Miss Armen?

AMANDA. (*Walking past his outstretched hand*) Glad to see you, Jim. I want to talk to you. Sit down.

JIM. (*Sitting at the right of the table as AMANDA takes her place on the bench at left*) Thank you, Miss Armen. I am glad to have this chance of talking to you. I have some good news to tell.

AMANDA. (*Grimly*) I'll let you talk first then.

JIM. That is good for I can scarcely wait to tell

you. The firm has asked me to start west to-day on an important mission for them. I have been advanced to a better position than I had hoped for for some time to come, and you know what that means to me!

AMANDA. (*Stiffly*) No.

JIM. (*Delighted*) It means that I can ask Margaret to be my wife!

AMANDA. I thought you—er—rather liked Margaret.

JIM. Liked her! Great Scott! Miss Armen, don't you know I have loved her ever since we were children at school?

AMANDA. Then why do you ask her to marry you?

JIM. (*Bewildered*) What? Why—er——

AMANDA. (*Leaning across the table and tapping it sharply*) Now see here, let's get right down to the point.

JIM. (*Hitching his chair closer*) Yes, do.

AMANDA. You want to do what is best for Margaret, don't you?

JIM. Certainly.

AMANDA. And the best that can be had is none too good for her.

JIM. Of course not.

AMANDA. And Margaret is the sort of a girl that even a duke might be proud to have for a wife.

JIM. (*Enthusiastically*) Indeed he might!

AMANDA. (*Turning on him sharply*) Then why do you want her to marry into a blacksmith's family? Your grandfather was a blacksmith, and would you have her marry you when she might just as well marry a lord?

JIM. (*Rising*) I certainly would.

AMANDA. (*Striking the table*) Well, I wouldn't. And I guess if Margaret took time to think it over she wouldn't either, and so I am going to take her to Europe.

JIM. (*Dropping limply back into his chair*) Europe!

AMANDA. Yes, Europe, where she can meet some lords and make up her mind which she would rather have—one of them or you.

JIM. What does she say about it?

AMANDA. (*Evasively*) She ain't had much to say, but she's goin'. How many girls would miss a trip to Europe? (*Rising*) And the thing for you to do is to go right along and tend to that precious business of yours and when we come back maybe you'll have something to offer her—provided she hasn't married someone else in the meantime.

JIM. (*Rising*) But you'll let me say good-bye to her?

AMANDA. (*Moving reluctantly to the right*) I suppose I'll have to. (*Turning back to JIM*) But first I want your solemn promise not to write to her while she is away.

JIM. (*Turning from her*) No, I couldn't promise that.

AMANDA. It is for her sake I'm askin' it. I want her to be free. And don't you know that if there is a better chance for happiness than you can give her that she ought to have it? (*JIM nods thoughtfully*) Then you'll do as I say?

JIM. Well—I—(*Turning with sudden decision*) Yes, I will.

AMANDA. You won't write and you won't send any message through anyone else?

JIM. No, I promise you she shall be perfectly free with nothing to remind her of me.

AMANDA. Then I'll call her and she can go with you as far as the gate. (*Going to left*) Good-bye. And remember.

JIM. I will, Miss Armen. Good-bye.

(*Enter ENOCH from left.*)

ENOCH. Jumpin' ginger! Mandy! What are you up to?

AMANDA. I'm comin' Enoch. (*Exit at left*)

ENOCH. (*Going to JIM*) Why, hello, Jim! You here!

JIM. (*Going to meet ENOCH*) How are you, Mr. Westervelt?

ENOCH. (*Shaking hands with JIM*) I'm first-rate. But what are you doin' around here this time of day?

JIM. I am just waiting for Margaret to walk out to the gate with me. (*Looking at his watch*) I must catch the four-thirty train.

ENOCH. Where are you going to take the train to that is better than here?

JIM. I am going west—out to the coast.

ENOCH. You don't mean it! Going to make your fortune?

JIM. I hope so.

(*They come down a little and HOWARD enters from up left.*)

ENOCH. Well, I have made mine—all I need—and I always keep some of it handy too, tucked away in the stockin'.

JIM. You don't keep it there yet!

(*HOWARD steps back and hides among the bushes, listening.*)

ENOCH. Yop. Got a cool two thousand hid under the corner of my mattress.

JIM. And you sleep on the first floor with your bed right beside the window! You are practically inviting someone to rob you!

ENOCH. (*Going to JIM and laying his hand on his arm*) Jim, you are the only one who knows or

even suspects about that stocking. (*Chuckling*) It is as safe as—Captain Kidd's treasure.

(HOWARD *steals quietly out at the rear.*)

JIM. I'd feel much happier if you'd put that money in the bank.

ENOCH. I couldn't do that. You see I've got to keep it handy so when Mandy says yes I'll have it all ready to start on the weddin' trip. But here comes Margaret. Good-bye, Jim, and lots of good luck to you. (*They shake hands heartily*)

JIM. Good-bye, Mr. Westervelt, and put that money away, won't you?

ENOCH. (*Going up*) Oh, now, now! I've got to keep it there, I tell you. Have a good trip! (*Exit up left*)

(*Enter MARGARET from down left.*)

MARGARET. (*Crossing quickly to him*) Oh, Jim, don't go yet!

JIM. (*Going to meet her*) I am sorry that I must.

MARGARET. Can't you wait until the next train?

JIM. (*Taking her hand*) Not possibly. I wish I cou'd.

MARGARET. There is so much to talk about. Has Auntie told you about Europe?

JIM. Yes, and for your sake I have promised to do as she asked.

(*They go to right.*)

MARGARET. So have I. Auntie has been so good to me I couldn't refuse her anything.

(*As they go out at right AMANDA comes in from left.*)

AMANDA. So he's gone! The first step in the romance hunt is taken and I ought to be as happy as a cricket, (*Crossing to right*) but all the time I can't help wonderin' how that crazy-headed Cindy is goin' to manage things while I'm away in Europe. (*Coming back to center*) I can't bear to think of everything runnin' to seed and gettin' slip-shod.

(*Enter HOWARD from rear. He looks about cautiously, then, seeing AMANDA, comes briskly down.*)

HOWARD. (*Coming down*) So you are here! And where is Margaret? I have been looking for her everywhere.

AMANDA. (*With a sigh as she looks off right*) She's clearin' the way for the romance hunt. Here she comes back lookin' like a cat in a thunder storm. (*Enter MARGARET down right dejectedly*) Sakes' alive, child! That's no face to wear to a strawberry festival! (*Going to her*) And can't you think a little bit of the good times ahead?

MARGARET. (*Putting her arms around her aunt*) I am going to try hard to think of it and to help you have a good time. (*To HOWARD who has been watching them sharply*) Are you waiting for us?

AMANDA. (*Sweeping off to left*) Yes, and everybody else is waiting for us, too. Come. (*Exit at left*)

HOWARD. (*Detaining MARGARET*) There is no hurry. Stay and talk to me.

MARGARET. (*Following AMANDA*) It is so much jollier to talk in chorus. Come and join the others.

(*Enter CLEM at rear. He is slight, slouching and very shabby.*)

HOWARD. (*Following MARGARET*) Of course,

if you'd rather. The aim of my life, Margaret, is to please you. (CLEM *whistles*. MARGARET *is too far to the left to see him but* HOWARD, *glancing over his shoulder, sees him and stops with a startled exclamation*) Go right on, Margaret, I—I have forgotten something. You'll excuse me, won't you?

MARGARET. Why, of course. But come back as soon as you can. (*Exit*)

CLEM. (*Slouching forward*) Well, here I am.

HOWARD. (*Going back to center*) And here you go! (*Snapping his fingers*) Trot right along out of this. (*He crosses to right*)

CLEM. (*Coming farther forward*) I have trotted all I am going to. Walked all the way out from the city and now I am going to rest a while. (*He drops into the chair at the right of the table*)

HOWARD. (*Coming down right*) It would have been better if you had rested in New York.

CLEM. (*Leaning back and smiling at HOWARD over his shoulder*) Ah-h! But I couldn't stay so far from you! You see, Vanter, you can't handle pitch without having some of it stick to your hands. I am the piece that is going to stick. You have me on your hands now and (*Stretching out comfortably*) I don't know how you are going to get me off.

HOWARD. (*Crossing to center*) What brought you here?

CLEM. I'm broke.

HOWARD. (*Turning away from him*) That is nothing to me.

CLEM. (*Sitting up*) It has not been thus far—but it will be.

HOWARD. You are like a phonograph with one tune. (*Tossing him a coin*) Here, go buy yourself a new record.

CLEM. (*Pocketing the money*) Thanks. The first payment on what you owe me!

HOWARD. (*Coming over to CLEM*) I have no

time to waste. Get down to business. What do you want?

CLEM. A living. You robbed me—literally picked my pockets—and the least you can do is to give me my bread and butter.

HOWARD. (*Scornfully*) Oh, really!

CLEM. Yes, really. It took me over a year to put my finger on one of your slick deals, but I've got you at last and now (*Striking the table*) I am going to *make* you do it.

HOWARD. (*Walking off to right*) Is that so!

CLEM. What about the Blue Point Mines? (*HOWARD starts and stops*) It's a tender spot just now, isn't it?

HOWARD. (*Coming back to CLEM*) Say, what is your scheme? Want me to send you a monthly allowance?

CLEM. (*Rising*) Send me nothing! I am going to stay right here and keep you under my eye. I am the piece of pitch that is going to S-T-I-C-K. (*Crosses to right*)

HOWARD. (*At the table*) If you suspect that something is wrong with the Blue Point Mines why don't you start an inquiry?

CLEM. (*At right, turning*) This is so much more artistic! The plan is this:—I shall be your shadow. When you drive, I drive; when you buy a new suit, I have one too; when you travel, I go along. And every time you turn around and see me you will remember what a mean, sneaking cur you are. It is a sort of poetic justice that is coming to you. (*Crosses to left as HOWARD goes up right*) Looking for an exit, are you? Well, there is no way out. You can't get rid of me. (*Sits at the table with an air of finality*) I am here to stay.

HOWARD. (*Striking his open palm*) I have it! I don't want you to go. (*Coming quickly down*) You are just the one I need!

CLEM. (*Rising and backing away from him*) No, you don't! You can't drag me into any of your slippery schemes.

HOWARD. (*Affably*) Oh, come now. Things are not as bad as they look to you. (*He sits easily on the edge of the table facing CLEM who drops down on the bench*) I invested some money for you and the thing didn't turn out as well as we expected and—well, you belong to the class of *hard losers* and ever since then you have wanted to get even. I know how you feel. (*Leaning toward CLEM and speaking soothingly*) But what is the use of making the worst of things! You used to have a sense of humor.

CLEM. I have yet. It is always getting me into some sort of a scrape.

HOWARD. You used to be a star in amateur theatricals, too, and here is a chance for you to shine again. Ha, ha! The woman who lives here is a queer old duck and I'd like to play a joke on her. She would be happy forever if she could meet a lord, and there is no reason why you should not give her the pleasure.

CLEM. (*Sitting up, interested*) What do you mean?

HOWARD. Just this. My father married while on a visit to England and he seldom brought my mother out here to Reedville, so the people here know very little about her. (*Laughing*) Our modesty kept us silent. But now it is time to let them know that she belonged to a noble family.

CLEM. What has that to do with me?

HOWARD. Oh, you are her sister's son—my own dear cousin—Sir Clement Blackwell, Lord of Blackmooreland. (*Laughing*) Can't you see them bow and scrape! The old lady will be a circus all by herself. She was going all the way to Europe to see a lord, but we will save her the trouble.

CLEM. (*Laughing*) Ha-ha! That would be a lark! (*Jumping up and striding quickly to center*) By Jove! I'll do it! But, (*Turning to HOWARD with sudden suspicion*) where do you come in?

HOWARD. (*Sliding off the table and walking slowly up*) Oh, I'll come in on the parties and enjoy the joke.

CLEM. And besides that?

HOWARD. (*Reluctantly, turning back*) Besides that? I suppose you may as well know. Besides that, if Miss Armen knows that I have such noble connections she will be willing to have me marry her niece.

CLEM. (*Satisfied, walking over to the right*) So that is it!

HOWARD. (*Going over to him*) Yes, that is it. And here is my key. Go to my rooms and dress in the best you can find, and when you come back remember that you are my cousin, Sir Clement, who has come over unexpectedly to visit me.

CLEM. (*Taking the key and starting up*) And, believe me, you'll be proud of your cousin!

HOWARD. (*Following him up*) I'll show you how to go. And get back as quickly as possible. These parties don't last forever.

(*As they disappear among the shrubbery AMANDA enters from left followed by MARGARET, SUSAN, NANCY, HEN ENOCH, MRS. BERDAN and KEZIA VREELAND. KEZIA is a round, jolly country woman. MRS. BERDAN is little, always wears a bonnet with strings tied under her chin and a small black cape over her shoulders. As you can plainly see by the expression of her face, she lives in a perpetual state of wonder and surprise.*)

SUSAN. (*As they come in*) Let us go and see your new tennis court, Margaret.

HEN. A new tennis court! Great!

MARGARET. You will have to use it while I am away.

(The young people start up.)

NANCY. *(Going up)*. Oh, we'll do that, all right!

SUSAN. *(To MARGARET)* But the charm will be gone.

AMANDA. Come, Kezia, Mrs. Berdan! Let us all go.

(The others go up, chatting and laughing, and exit at left, but AMANDA detains ENOCH who is fanning himself with a red bandanna handkerchief.)

AMANDA. *(Catching at his arm impatiently)* For the land sake, Enoch, put that thing away!

ENOCH. *(Giving the handkerchief a flourish)* What, this?

AMANDA. Yes, that. *(With a gesture of disgust)* You make me so ashamed! *(They both come down)* I have asked and asked you, when you come to see me to bring a white one.

ENOCH. *(Diving into an inner pocket)* And I did. *(Producing it proudly)* There it is! See.

AMANDA. *(Coming farther down)* Well, what good does it do tucked away in your pocket? And those ugly old---

ENOCH. *(Bringing out a blue one and caressing them both)* Amanda, I like those handkerchiefs. Do you know why?

AMANDA. *(Turning away from him sharply)* I certainly do not.

ENOCH. *(Following her)* I like 'em because they are genuine.

AMANDA. Genuine cotton!

ENOCH. Yes, genuine cotton, and they don't pretend to be anything else. (*Holding out the folded white handkerchief*) Now that, I bought for pure linen, but when I got it home I found that it was some sort of linenine—a fake, a sham, a make believe. That's why I don't like it. Whatever I'm gettin'—whether it's jewelry or jam or a handkerchief—I want it to be *genuine*. (*Taking it from his pocket and giving it to AMANDA*) Oh, here is that book you lent me.

AMANDA. (*Taking the book*) Did you read it?

ENOCH. (*Going to right*) Every last word of it, and it's no good.

AMANDA. (*Horried*) Enoch Westervelt!

ENOCH. (*Turning back*) Folks like it tells about never lived on this earth.

AMANDA. They do, too!

ENOCH. Then it's too bad. That's all I've got to say. (*Going to her*) But you're genuine, Amanda. Right down in your heart you are kind and true and sensible enough, and I never could see how you let this nonsense get ahold of you.

AMANDA. (*Going quickly to bench and throwing the book down*) Nonsense! Enoch Westervelt, you are too narrow and countrified for any sort of use! You ought to get out in the world and see something. (*She flounces over to right*)

ENOCH. (*Down center*) Well, I'm willin'! I've told you often enought that when you marry me, we'll go all around this old world and see the whole blessed thing, if you like. I've got the money handy to start with any minute you say so.

AMANDA. (*Turning on him sharply*) There you go again! Marry you! (*Coming toward him*) How many times must I tell you no—no—NO! Now don't keep on askin' me any more. (*She starts up*)

ENOCH. If I don't keep on askin' you, how will I know when you change your mind?

(Enter KEZIA from up left, followed by HOWARD and MARGARET.)

MARGARET. Oh, Mrs. Vreeland, don't go. We have just come to get some chairs so that you would have a comfortable place to sit.

KEZIA. (*Hurrying down*) Don't get any chairs for me. I don't like to miss anything, but I'll be late for supper as it is. I've got to do some errands on my way home. Good-bye, Amanda.

AMANDA. (*Stopping at center*) Come in soon again, Kezia.

KEZIA. (*Down right*) I'll try to. Good-bye everybody. Come and see me!

AMANDA. We will!

ALL. Good-bye.

(*Exit KEZIA down right.*)

HOWARD. (*Going out at left*) I'll get those chairs.

MARGARET. (*To AMANDA*) Aren't you and Mr. Westervelt going to come and watch them play tennis?

AMANDA. (*Starting up again*) I am.

MARGARET. (*Going to him*) And you, Mr. Westervelt, aren't you coming?

ENOCH. (*Going up*) I guess I'd better be goin'.

MARGARET. (*Walking up beside him*) Why, what is the trouble?

ENOCH. I feel a grouchy spell comin' on and I guess I'd better get under cover till it's over. Good-bye! (*Exit up right*)

MARGARET. I am sorry. Good-bye! (*Turning back and looking off right*) Oh, Auntie, here comes a stranger!

AMANDA. (*Coming down*) Whose comin'?

MARGARET. (*Coming down*) I don't know, a stranger.

(Enter HOWARD from left and with chairs.)

HOWARD. (*Dropping the chairs and looking off right*) By Jove! Clement Blackwell!

(Enter CLEM from right, carefully dressed, a walking stick in his hand and the listless slouch all gone. He speaks affectedly with an exaggerated English accent.)

CLEM. (*Coming forward to greet HOWARD*) My word! So I have found you at last! And I've had a jolly long hunt for you, too!

HOWARD. (*Shaking hands heartily*) This is a delightful surprise! But why didn't you let me know you were coming?

CLEM. (*Leaning wearily on his cane*) Cablegrams and letters are such a beastly nuisance, don'cher know. But you are looking quite fit, old boy. How are you, though?

HOWARD. I am fine, thank you. But let me introduce you to my friends.

CLEM. (*Adjusting his monocle*) Charmed, I am sure.

(HEN enters at rear and stares and gapes during the introduction.)

HOWARD. Miss Armen, allow me to introduce my cousin, Sir Clement Blackwell, Lord of Blackmooreland.

AMANDA. A lord! Your cousin a lord! M—my land o' Goshen! How—how do you do?

CLEM. (*Bowing*) Ah, Miss Armen!

HOWARD. Margaret, Sir Clement. Sir Clement, Miss Berry.

CLEM. Charmed I am sure. Delighted to meet you, Miss Berry.

(Exit HEN up left as CINDY enters down right.)

AMANDA. (*Rushing frantically to CINDY while HOWARD, CLEM and MARGARET talk together near center*) Oh, Cindy! Quick! Go get some tea ready and bring it out here. And some bread and jam and cake and everything we've got in the house to eat. Howard's cousin has come to see us and he's a *lord*!

CINDY. (*Her eyes bulging*) A lord! Like we've been readin' about?

AMANDA. Yes, yes. Hurry, Cindy, hurry! A lord can never live without his afternoon tea.

CINDY. My land o' honey! Will I hurry! Watch me! (*She runs out, down right with long, leaping strides*)

(HEN, leading the tennis players comes in from up left and AMANDA rushes up to them and talks excitedly as they all come down.)

MARGARET. (*To CLEM as she and CLEM and HOWARD come down left*) So you have come to spend the summer here! I hope you will like our quiet little town, Sir Clement.

CLEM. (*Affectedly*) If it is quiet I know I shall like it. We have been having such a busy time at home—so much entertaining, don'cher know. Receptions and balls and all that sort of thing. I have been da-ancing madly for the last three months. I am really quite worn out.

AMANDA. (*Coming down*) Howard, won't you introduce these people?

HOWARD. Certainly, Clement! (*He introduces CLEM while AMANDA leads MARGARET to right*)

AMANDA. (*To MARGARET*) Sakes' alive! I can hardly believe my eyes! Isn't this grand!

MARGARET. It is splendid, because, oh, Auntie! now you will not want to go to Europe!

(Enter CINDY from down right with a tray on which is a white cake, a quart jar of preserves, a loaf of bread and half of a pie.)

CINDY. (*Crosses to left*) Dis was all I could git in de fust grab, Miss Mandy, but I got de kittle on an' I'll hab de tea ready in a jiffy. (*She sets the tray down on the table and goes out again at right, only MRS. BERDAN and HOWARD having noticed her—MRS. BERDAN with wonder, HOWARD with amusement*)

MRS. BERDAN. (*Coming forward*) I wanter know! You ain't goin' to eat again before supper, be you?

AMANDA. (*Haughtily, going up center*) We are going to have afternoon tea.

(CLEM, *evidently very much attracted, leads SUSAN down left. NANCY, MARGARET and HEN move to bench at right, HOWARD, AMANDA, and MRS. BERDAN stand at center, all but HOWARD talking excitedly and glancing now and then at CLEM. HOWARD answers questions with a subdued sort of amusement.*)

CLEM. (*To SUSAN, dropping some of his affectation*) I am beginning to think that I should like to stay here all winter too. What do you do to amuse yourselves in the winter-time?

SUSAN. We go skating and sleigh-riding, and we have singing school and spelling matches. (*Laughing*) You would think you were living in the last century, I am afraid.

CLEMENT. I should think I was living in the best of all times and places.

(Enter CINDY briskly from right carrying a big, brown tea-pot. SUSAN and CLEMENT cross to right.)

CINDY. All ready, ladies and gentlemen! Set right up to de table an' I'll git yo' all some cups and sassers. (*All but MRS. BERDAN and HOWARD lift their hands in astonishment as they turn and see the table*) Come right along now. Don' be bashful. (*At the table arranging things*) Dere's enough fo' all an' ebbery body. Come right along while de tea is bilin' hot. (*Going to CLEMENT*) I reckon, Mr. Lord, yo' all mus' be gittin' sort o' crampy-like wait-in' fo' your afternoon tea party.

AMANDA. (*Coming quickly down*) Cindy! Keep your place!

CINDY. (*In sudden panic*) Keep my place! My land o' cotton, Miss Mandy, yo' wasn't goin' to send me away, was yo'?

AMANDA. (*Surveying the table with dismay*) Oh, Cindy!

CINDY. (*Hurrying back to table*) Ain't it enough, Miss Mandy?

(*Enter RUFUS from left drying his hands on the gingham apron he now wears.*)

RUFUS. My land o' sassafras!

(*Enter LIZA STUEBBIN from down right. She is slender and sharp of voice and feature. Her clothes are all meager looking, and she wears a red plaid shawl pulled tightly across her thin shoulders. She is excited now, her hat is tilted to one side and she is generally disheveled.*)

LIZA. (*Hurrying in*) My stars and pumpkins! I'm all out of breath. And you wouldn't believe me if I was to talk from now on till sunrise, but it is as true as I stand here. Nothin' like it ever happened before in Reedville, and I couldn't hardly believe it myself when he told me.

ALL. What? What is it? What is the matter?

LIZA. (*Down right*) Matter! Jim Harrison's run off with all Enoch Westervelt's money!

(CINDY collapses on the bench at left.)

ALL. Never!

(*The following six speeches come in quick succession.*)

HOWARD. Impossible!

HEN. Jimminy crimps!

AMANDA. Mercy on us!

MRS. BERDAN. I wanter know!

SUSAN. I don't believe it!

HEN. Neither do I.

LIZA. (*Coming forward*) I told you so! I knew you wouldn't believe me. (*Stopping at center*) But it as true as I stand here. I was takin' a short-cut through Enoch's yard and I seen and heard him through his open window. He'd torn his bed apart and was lookin' through it. "It's gone!" says he. "Every red cent of it!" And then I stepped up and asked him *what*, and he was so upset that for once in his life he talked right out. He'd hid his money in that bed and Jim Harrison took it!

SUSAN. How do you know that *Jim* took it?

LIZA. (*Triumphantly, going to left*) Nobody else *could* have done it.

CINDY. (*Jumping up*) Oh, shucks! Miss Liza.

(*Enter ENOCH from dozen right.*)

ENOCH. (*To LIZA, bitterly*) So you've told it all, have you?

LIZA. (*Turning to him with satisfaction*) Pretty nearly.

MARGARET. (*Going to ENOCH who stands a little to the right of center*) Tell me that it isn't true.

ENOCH. (*Sadly*) The money is gone.

MARGARET. (*Laying her hand on his arm*) But Jim——

LIZA. (*Dramatically, striding back to center*) Jim was the only one that knew!

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE:—*The same as ACT I except that a second table is now covered with a white cloth and placed before the bench at right where AMANDA sits presiding over a dainty tea service. MRS. BERDAN sits a little back of the table, SUSAN sits to the right of the bench with HOWARD standing behind her, and MARGARET and CLEM stand to the left of the table.*

THE TIME:—*Is three weeks later than the first act.*

CLEM. (*Affectedly*) Really, Miss Armen, Lady Nilton's afternoons were a beastly bore compared with yours. These are so delightfully different, don'cher know! (*To HOWARD*) Aren't they, cousin?

HOWARD. Decidedly.

MRS. BERDAN. I wanter know! (*To HOWARD*) Was you there, too?

HOWARD. Oh, yes. I always call on Lady Nilton when I go to England.

AMANDA. Do tell! And you've never said a word to us about it!

SUSAN. Howard can keep his own council better

than any one else I know. (*She sets her cup on the table and rises*)

HOWARD. Don't be too hard on me, Susan. You know right well that if I had come home and told about all the lords and ladies I had met abroad you would have thought me an insufferable nuisance.

AMANDA. (*Eagerly*) We won't now. Do tell us about Lady Nilton's parties.

MARGARET. And some of your other experiences in England too. Howard, I am sure you have some more surprises in store for us.

SUSAN. (*Crossing to left*) I am sure he has.

AMANDA. Pass the cake to Sir Clement, somebody.

HOWARD. (*Springing forward*) Allow me! (*Passes cake to CLEM*) It is a pleasure to serve Sir Clement.

CLEM. (*Helping himself*) Ah-h, really! And there is nothing that pleases me better than to eat such delicious cake and to listen to my cousin talk. (*Going to bench down left*) But, come, Miss Berry, let us leave that chair for him—he must be comfortable while he talks.

(*CLEM and MARGARET sit on bench, and HOWARD, disgusted, goes to chair beside MRS. BERDAN. SUSAN returns to the table, turning, now and then, with a troubled look at CLEM and MARGARET.*)

AMANDA. (*Eagerly to HOWARD*) Tell us about Sir Clement's home. I just know it is a grand old place with ruins in the yard!

(*HOWARD nods and begins to talk as NANCY runs in.*)

NANCY. (*Coming in*) Good-afternoon, Sir

Clement! Howd'y do, Margaret! (*Waving her hand to the others*) Howd'y do, everybody!

THE OTHERS. (*Except CLEM who simply rises and bows*) Good-afternoon, Nancy.

(AMANDA rises and goes to HOWARD.)

NANCY. (*Fluttering over to CLEM*) Oh, Sir Clement, will you be here to the lawn party to-night?

CLEM. Certainly, Miss Reed. I wouldn't miss it for the world.

NANCY. But there are to be races at Harverhay to-morrow and you'd have to go to-night to be there in time.

CLEM. Do you want me to go?

NANCY. Oh, dear me, no! But Englishmen always do go to races.

CLEM. (*Striking an attitude and staring through his monocle*) Ah-h! That is because they have nothing better to do, poor fellows! If they lived here in Reedville they would never think of such a thing.

MARGARET. (*Rising*) I am glad you are so well entertained, Sir Clement. Come and have some more tea.

(*As they go up right to the table, HOWARD and AMANDA come down left talking earnestly.*)

HOWARD. (*Coming down with AMANDA, as the others gather about the table chatting and laughing*) I don't mind telling you, Miss Armen, but please do not let it get about.

AMANDA. I won't whisper it to a soul.

HOWARD. Then I am going to tell you a secret that I have guarded very carefully. When a certain old uncle of mine gets through with his title he is going to pass it on to me.

AMANDA. (*Down center*) You! A title!

HOWARD. Yes. I shall be Lord Brightmooreland. The estate joins my cousin's and my title is of exactly the same value as his.

AMANDA. And to think we have been livin' near neighbors to you all these years and never guessed it!

HOWARD. And please do not let any one guess it now, either. It would be very embarrassing to me here where every one is just plain Mister, or Jack, or Sam. Sir Clement does not mind because he is used to it, but I— Well, I like my old friends to just speak to me as they always have.

AMANDA. Just think of all that's happened this last month, and I didn't have to go to Europe for it either!

HOWARD. And Margaret—

AMANDA. (*Sitting on bench down left*) Oh, I was just goin' to speak about Margaret. I think she takes to Sir Clement right well, don't you?

HOWARD. (*Solemnly*) I hope not.

AMANDA. (*Half rising*) You hope not! For goodness' sakes, why?

HOWARD. Because, Miss Armen, his affections are otherwise engaged.

AMANDA. My land o' Goshen! Then we'll have to go to Europe after all!

HOWARD. (*Leaning comfortably back against the table*) I don't see why.

AMANDA. But if Margaret is going to marry a lord!

HOWARD. (*Taking the chair at right of the table a little forward and sitting*) I have just told you that my title is as good as his and I will marry Margaret to-morrow, if she says so. You have not lost anything. And it would not be wise to let Margaret marry a strange lord. Some of them are not quite up to the mark. Many of them are very

poor and marry American girls for their money. You know *I* wouldn't do that.

AMANDA. Yes, you've got all the money you need. I guess you could buy all Reedville if you wanted to.

HOWARD. And then there is this advantage, Miss Armen,—you have known me all your life.

AMANDA. And yet there is a whole lot I didn't know about you!

HOWARD. And remember, you are not to tell the things you have just found out.

AMANDA. Not even to Margaret?

HOWARD. Oh, no. I particularly do not want Margaret to know. You see, I want the title and all that to be a surprise to her—a—er—sort of wedding present.

AMANDA. My land o' Goshen! If it ain't just like you'd read about in a book! Lords just pourin' down! Do you think any more of your folks will be comin' over soon? (*She rises*)

CLEM. (*Coming down*) Really, cousin, I need your help. They're telling jokes and riddles. American ones, and they're quite beyond me, don'cher know!

(*Enter HEN down right. He has just come from the hay fields and wears a broad straw hat, his sleeves are rolled up, his shirt is open at the throat and he carries a rake.*)

MARGARET. Oh, here is Hen!

HOWARD. How are you, Hen?

SUSAN. Hello!

MARGARET. (*At table*) You are just in time. Come here.

HEN. (*Embarrassed*) Oh, no, thank you. (*To all*) Good-afternoon. (*To MARGARET*) I have just come in from the hay fields, I didn't know you were having a party.

SUSAN. (*Coming cordially dozen to him*) We are always having a party these days, but the more the merrier. Don't go!

CLEM. My word, no! Don't go, Mr. Bush.

MARGARET. (*Looking off right*) We need your help. Here comes Cindy with the lanterns to hang for the party to-night.

(*Enter RUFUS and CINDY from down right with a clothes-basket filled with chinese lanterns.*)

CINDY. (*Coming in*) Git-ap, Tangle-foot! Can't you all gallop a little! Step along, now! Make yo'self lively.

RUFUS. (*Protesting*) Now, Cindy, I'se agwine to——

CINDY. You'se agwine to git busy. Yo' all can't call on me and sit lazin' around like white folks.

(*As they reach the middle of the lawn they stop and put the basket down and the others all gather around it.*)

NANCY. (*Leaning over the basket*) Oh, aren't they pretty ones!

AMANDA. (*Taking a roll of wire from the basket*) Here, Cindy—Rufus—Take this and stretch it across the tennis court. You know how.

CINDY. (*Taking it*) Yas'm I knows how. Git along dere, Tangle-foot! Git-ap wid yo'. (*Exit CINDY up left, driving the protesting RUFUS ahead of her*)

MARGARET. (*Going to the basket*) Let us hang some of them right to the trees.

THE OTHERS. Good! Fine! Just the thing!

(*They select lanterns and start out in different directions to hang them.*)

SUSAN. (*Starting up left*) I'll hang up these!

NANCY. (*Going up right, taking CLEM with her, much to HEN's disgust*) And I'll put these up here!

(HEN follows SUSAN, but watches NANCY unhappily.)

AMANDA. (*Going up*) Come, Mrs. Berdan, you and I'll go and see what Cindy and Rufus are up to.

(*They go out up left.*)

MARGARET. (*Rising from her knee at the basket and looking about, a lantern in each hand*) Where shall I hang these?

HOWARD. (*Taking one lantern from her*) We'll attend to that afterwards. Now I must finish what I have been trying to tell you for the past week. Margaret, I——

MARGARET. (*Avoiding him and crossing to the left*) Oh, tell me about the weather or something nice and interesting like that. Do you think it will rain to-morrow?

HOWARD. (*Following her*) This means so much to me, please don't be frivolous.

MARGARET. (*Swinging her other lantern as she walks back to right*) But I am frivolous. I think of a dozen jolly things a minute. I can't discuss one subject forever as you do.

HOWARD. I can't help it, Margaret, all of my thoughts lead to you.

MARGARET. (*Sighing*) How monotonous!

HOWARD. It would please your aunt if you married me.

MARGARET. (*Surprised, stopping in her walk*) It would!

HOWARD. Very much.

MARGARET. When did she change her mind?

HOWARD. I fancy she began to change it when my cousin arrived.

MARGARET. (*Crossing to left*) Howard, why did you never tell us about him?

HOWARD. Do you think it would have been nice of us to go around boasting about our noble connections?

MARGARET. (*Sitting on bench*) You need not have *boasted*. And your father never mentioned him either.

HOWARD. (*Leaning over the back of the chair at right of table and nervously twisting his moustache*) No. Er—Father always cautioned us not to. You see titles are not as popular here as they might be. And besides, isn't it better to be valued for what you are instead of propping up your reputation with a title?

MARGARET. (*Rising and starting back to right*) Of course it is—but—Well, you don't mind using your titled cousin to influence Auntie.

HOWARD. (*Injured*) How could I help it that Clem came over here?

MARGARET. (*Relenting a little*) Perhaps you couldn't. But let us talk of something else.

HOWARD. (*Following her*) Very well. I have something else very important to say to you—about Jim. (*MARGARET stops, startled*) Have you written him?

MARGARET. Since when have you been supervisor of my correspondence?

HOWARD. Don't be angry. I am only speaking for his good. Don't ask him to come back. Mr. Westervelt will never push the matter while he is away, but if he returns I am afraid he will——

MARGARET. Do all he can to prove Jim innocent! (*Goes down right*)

HOWARD. (*Turning back to center*) All he can, but he can't do much. If you have even a little

friendly feeling for Jim you will beg him not to come.

MARGARET. (*Starting back to left*) If I could manage it Jim would be here now to face all the falsehoods that have been told about him.

HOWARD. But you can't? He isn't coming?

MARGARET. (*Turning away from him*) I—I haven't heard from him.

HOWARD. (*Drawing a deep breath of relief*) Ah-h! You see he—does not dare come back!

SUSAN. (*Coming quickly down, followed by HEN*) See, Margaret, where we have put them!

MARGARET. (*Turning to admire*) Oh, aren't they pretty! (*She and HOWARD go up*)

NANCY. (*Hurrying down to the basket*) Oh, give me some more lanterns to hang! You stay there, Sir Clement, I'll bring them.

(*But CLEM joins SUSAN as she goes up with more lanterns and HEN detains NANCY.*)

SUSAN. (*Going up*) I'll put these back on the apple tree.

CLEM. (*Following her*) And I will help you.

(*Business of hanging the lanterns and pleasant dallying in the background.*)

HEN. (*Leading NANCY forward*) Nancy, I am getting tired of this.

NANCY. (*Purposely misunderstanding him*) You haven't begun yet.

HEN. You know what I mean.

NANCY. (*Airily*) Oh, do I?

HEN. I want to know whether we are engaged or not.

NANCY. (*Lightly, going down to table*) Aren't we?

HEN. (*Following her*) Well, I haven't broken it off.

NANCY. (*Moving away from him*) Have I?

HEN. You act as if you'd like to. What is the trouble? What have I done? (NANCY *sits on bench, turns away from him and does not answer*) Tell me what I have done.

NANCY. (*Reluctantly*) Nothing.

HEN. (*Standing beside her*) Then what is the trouble?

NANCY. (*Pouting*) I didn't say there was any trouble, did I?

HEN. You have acted it. Ever since that English dude came here with his fancy manners you——

NANCY. (*Rising*) It would be a good thing if you copied some of those manners. The idea of coming to a tea party looking as you do this minute! (*She crosses to right*)

HEN. (*Gently*) You know I didn't mean to. I didn't know——

NANCY. You did it just the same, and you do other things too. And—and——

HEN. What has made you angry?

NANCY. (*Passionately, stopping down right*) I am *not* angry. It—it is just——

HEN. What? Give me something that sounds like half a reason.

NANCY. Well, it is this:—Now that I have met a lord and had afternoon tea every day for a while I am not as anxious as I was to be plain Mrs. Bush and stay at home and wash dishes and get the supper.

HEN. You would not have to stay at home all the time and you could have some one to help you with the work.

NANCY. (*Going up, half crying*) But I don't want to be plain Mrs.! (*With a sudden change of*

manner as she meets CLEM and SUSAN coming down) I have some more lanterns to hang, Sir Clement.

HEN. (*Stepping between them*) Don't trouble Sir Clement. I'll help you put them up.

CLEM. Aw, thanks awfully. (*To SUSAN*) Shall we get some more? (*Exit NANCY and HEN at left talking earnestly*) This is the best part of the whole show, isn't it?

SUSAN. (*At the basket*) You said that just like a thoroughbred American.

CLEM. And I am going to say more things just like it. Here are some lanterns without candles, let us fix them.

(*They take the lanterns and a box of candles down to bench at left.*)

SUSAN. You always drop some of your English accent when you talk to me; my Yankee twang must be catching. (*She sits on bench*)

CLEM. (*Sitting in chair to the right of bench*) When you see me again I hope I will have learned some of the other good lessons you teach.

SUSAN. (*Surprised*) When I see you again!

CLEM. Yes, I am going away. (*Putting aside the lantern he was busy with and speaking very seriously*) I am tired of idling around like this and I am going to get to work. I am going to do something useful if it is only to help the Ginnies dig a ditch. If I can't get any further, I am going to be a plain, honest man and earn my own living.

SUSAN. When are you going?

CLEM. At once.

SUSAN. But you will come to the party to-night?

CLEM. No. I said I would but about twenty minutes ago I changed my mind. I decided then what to do and I am going to do it immediately. I

can't stand this any longer—not another hour. I am through with shams and pretense and I am going to cut loose (*rising*) right now.

SUSAN. (*Rising*) Not this minute!

CLEM. The quicker the better.

SUSAN. (*Going to him*) But they will all be so disappointed. Aren't you even going to say good-bye?

CLEM. Only to you. I want you to understand why I am going..

SUSAN. But I don't—fully. (*Crosses to his right*)

CLEM. I—(*Shaking his head*) No I am not going to say any more just now. But I am doing the best I can see to do—I am trying to get back to *real* things and (*laughing*) when I return I hope both you and Mr. Westervelt will label me a *genuine article*.

SUSAN. We can do that now. (CLEM *turns his head away*) I think you are a little foolish to leave like this—so suddenly and with so little explanation.

CLEM. (*Going to left*) I know it looks badly, but—(*Turning back*) Well, it seems to me the only way—to drop the worthless and get after the good as soon as you see it. And—(*Going to SUSAN*) I think you trust me, don't you?

SUSAN. Of course I do!

CLEM. That is a comfort. I shall remember it. Good-bye.

SUSAN. (*Taking his offered hand*) Good-bye. But I wish you were not quite so—so impatient.

CLEM. Some day I will tell you all about it. I have been foolish, that is all. But now I am going to be—worth while, I hope. Good-bye.

(*Enter AMANDA at rear.*)

AMANDA. Susan, come here. Quick!

SUSAN. (*Hurrying up*) I am coming. Good-bye, Sir Clement.

(*Enter MARGARET down right. CLEM stands gazing after SUSAN, turns suddenly and collides with MARGARET.*)

MARGARET. Oh, Sir Clement!

CLEM. I beg your pardon! I—I—I——

(*Enter HOWARD down right.*)

MARGARET. (*Laughing*) That's all right. I saw how it was. (*She follows SUSAN*) You are forgiven.

(*Exit AMANDA and SUSAN up right.*)

CLEM. (*Following MARGARET*) It was very awkward of me. I—I——

MARGARET. (*Going up*) We all have our awkward moments. Don't worry. (*She follows SUSAN out and CLEM, turning quickly finds HOWARD standing directly in his path, glaring at him*)

CLEM. So you are here!

HOWARD. (*Stepping up to CLEM*) Yes, and I want this stopped.

CLEM. (*Coming down*) It is going to be.

HOWARD. Margaret is——

CLEM. (*Turning to him, surprised*) Oh, Margaret! Is that what you are growling about? Well, set your mind at ease. I have spoken a good word for you both to her and her aunt whenever I could. I have done more for you than most sane men would, but (*Laughing*) I couldn't help it. It was wonderful to see how much the aunt would swallow! Poor old lady! She's a good sort in spite of her foolishness. (*Down left*) But now I

am through with the whole thing. I am going away. I've quit. Thrown up my job.

HOWARD. (*Coming down center*) What is the trouble?

CLEM. (*Going to right*) I am sick of it—that's all. It was all right at first when it just looked like a joke, but now when the other side begins to show up—(*Turning back*) Oh, there is no use in trying to explain to you!

HOWARD. (*Over by table*) None whatever. You went into this thing with your eyes open. Now don't play the saintly innocent! You knew what you were doing.

CLEM. I should have known had I stopped to think, but it just seemed like a lark, and now——

HOWARD. And now you are going to be a quitter and leave just when you might have been of some use.

CLEM. There is nothing more that I could or would do for you.

HOWARD. If you are going to leave me in this way I hope you don't expect me ever to help you out of any scrape. (*Goes up*) Good-bye. I wash my hands of you.

CLEM. (*Going to center*) That is the best thing you ever did for me. (*Enter AMANDA briskly down right as HOWARD goes out at rear*) Now for a new start! (*Turning quickly he collides with AMANDA*) Gracious!

AMANDA. Lawsy me! I hope I didn't hurt you, Sir Clement. Sakes' alive! We haven't got so many lords around here that we can afford to be careless with 'em yet. You're sure you ain't hurt?

CLEM. Very sure, Miss Armen, and I am glad to see you. I think, after all, I'd better tell you something right now. I was not going to speak about it but, on second thought, perhaps it would be best to make a clean breast of it at once. I er——

AMANDA. (*Affably*) Don't mind me, Sir Clement, speak right out.

CLEM. (*Fidgeting nervously as he moves to left*) It is not an easy thing to say. You have been very kind to me, Miss Armen, and you have led me to believe that—er—um—you—er—respected me and—er—well—I—er—want you to know that I appreciate it more, perhaps, than you realize. You have—er—been very good to me and now—er—I Well, I want you to know— You never would have suspected it so I will have to tell you—er——

AMANDA. Good lands! If Howard hadn't told me what he did I would have thought that you was tryin' to tell me you was in love with Margaret!

CLEM. (*Going to her*) Oh, no. Far from it! I want to ask you——

AMANDA. ME! You want to ask *me*! (*Fluttering about in a great state of excitement*) My goodness, gracious sakes alive! You want to ask me! Well, I never in all my life! But that's the way it goes in books. The thing you don't expect always comes and the good deservin' heroine gets the lord! Lawsy me! Let's go right over and tell the folks about it!

CLEM. (*Who has nearly collapsed from the shock*) No, no, no, no! Please don't. (*Mopping his brow*) It really wouldn't—er— Well, it is not the way they do in England. And—er—well, you see this is so sudden that I feel sort of upset. (*He sinks down on bench at left*)

AMANDA. (*At center*) Upset don't tell the half! I can guess how you feel.

CLEM. (*Distracted*) But you can't! Great Scott! What shall I do! (*Jumping up*) What can I say! How can I tell you!

AMANDA. (*Soothingly, going to him*) Don't try just now. Sort of calm yourself down—my hero! (*CLEM sinks back on the bench and groans*)

And to think of me being *Lady Amanda!* (*Fluttering off again*) Well, I can't hardly grasp it,

CLEM. (*His head in his hands*) Neither can I!

AMANDA. A romance like this was well worth waitin' for. Lady Amanda Blackwell! Think of it!

CLEM. (*Groaning*) Must I?

AMANDA. What will the neighbors say, I wonder!

CLEM. I wonder!

(*Enter MARGARET at rear.*)

AMANDA. I guess they'll believe in romance now!

MARGARET. (*Coming down*) Oh, Auntie, please come and tell us about these extra benches.

AMANDA. Lawsy me! Sakes alive! How am I ever goin' to face everybody and not tell! I'm comin', Margaret.

(*As she hurries up to MARGARET, HEN and NANCY come back from left, SUSAN and HOWARD and MRS. BERDAN come in from rear and CLEM slips out at left unnoticed.*)

SUSAN. (*Looking off right as she comes down*) Here comes Liza Stuebbin!

MRS. BERDAN. Runnin' like mad!

AMANDA. (*Looking off left*) And here comes Enoch Westervelt like all the dogs was after him! Land sakes! I wonder what's goin' to happen now!

MRS. BERDAN. I wanter know!

HEN. (*Looking off left*) Just see him leg it!

HOWARD. I'll bet on Liza!

SUSAN. (*Laughing*) So will I.

MARGARET. She is at the gate.

NANCY. (*Excitedly*) Mr. Westervelt is here!

(*Enter ENOCH from left, limp, warm and out of breath.*)

ENOCH. (*Fanning himself with his handkerchief*) Whew-w-w! I—I'm——

SUSAN. (*Placing a chair at center*) Sit down, Mr. Westervelt, and get your breath.

(*He drops into the chair panting.*)

MARGARET.	}	(<i>Crowding about him</i>) Let me fan you, Mr. Westervelt!
NANCY.		
HEN.		

AMANDA. (*Snatching off his hat and fanning him with it*) For the land sakes! Enoch, what's the matter?

(*ENOCH gasps but can not answer.*)

MARGARET. Shall I get you a drink?

(*ENOCH gasps and shakes his head.*)

MRS. BERDAN. Breathe through your nose, Mr. Westervelt. You'll catch it faster.

(*Enter LIZA hurriedly down right.*)

LIZA. (*Coming in*) Land sakes! I—I—I—Umm-m-m—(*She can say no more and sinks into the chair that is quickly placed for her to the right of ENOCH*)

MRS. BERDAN. (*Clasping her hands*) Plumb beat out! My sakes' alive!

AMANDA. (*Fluttering excitedly about LIZA*) My land o' Goshen! She must be far gone when she can't talk!

SUSAN. (*Going to LIZA*) We'll fan her, too.

(*SUSAN, MRS. BERDAN and AMANDA fan LIZA, and MARGARET, NANCY and HEN attend to ENOCH, HOWARD stands aloof.*)

MRS. BERDAN. (*Running about excitedly, looking for something to fan with*) Such goin's on! Such foolishness! What's gettin' into folks! (*She snatches a plate from the table and fans with that*)

MARGARET. (*To ENOCH*) Do you feel better?

(*ENOCH nods.*)

AMANDA. (*To LIZA*) Are you all right, Liza?

(*LIZA nods.*)

NANCY. (*To HEN*) Fan harder.

(*HEN obeys vigorously.*)

SUSAN. Undo her bonnet strings.

(*She unties LIZA's bonnet.*)

MARGARET. (*To ENOCH*) How are you?

ENOCH. B-b-b-better.

MRS. BERDAN. (*Fanning with the plate*) Well, I never! You would never catch *me* loosin' my head like this!

AMANDA. (*As LIZA struggles to speak*) Lawsy me! She ain't got her talkin' breath yet!

ENOCH. (*Straightening up so suddenly that the others are startled*) I have! She's been spyin' on me and tryin' to find out all my business, but if it's got to be told, I'll tell it myself.

LIZA. (*Sitting up smartly*) No, you won't! He's been telegraphin' all over the country, that's what he's been doin'.

ENOCH. And I'm goin' to do it some more, too.

LIZA. (*Nodding emphatically*) He knows something that ought to be told. Meddlin' with such things ain't respectable, and if he won't tell what he ought to I'll shame him into it.

ENOCH. I knew you'd haul some slander into it. But you can't make me talk.

LIZA. (*Springing up*) Well, I ain't afraid to tell what I know. (ENOCH *jumps up as if to speak but stands dumb with astonishment*) A stranger came to town here more'n three weeks ago and was seen goin' into Howard Vanter's house and nothin's been seen of him since. Gone! Every hide and hair of him. (*Shaking her finger at ENOCH*) And you know all about it and you're tryin' to hide it all. What became of him?

MRS. BERDAN. (*Clasping her hands*) I wanter know!

ENOCH. Why don't you ask Howard?

(HOWARD *is alarmed.*)

LIZA. (*Stepping closer to ENOCH*) It is you that is doin' all the telegraphin' and fuss.

AMANDA. (*Pulling at LIZA's shawl*) Liza, how you talk!

LIZA. (*Jerking away and going to left*) If that man ain't found pretty quick I'll let the constable know about it, I will. The men in this town ain't got spunk enough to catch a mosquito, but I——

ENOCH. If that man went to Howard's house what business is it of mine?

LIZA. (*Turning sharply*) You think he stole your money.

ALL. OH-h-h!

LIZA. (*Coming back to center*) You're telegraphin' to him every day.

ENOCH. I am not.

LIZA. (*Kecnly*) Then who is it to?

ENOCH. Wouldn't you like to know!

LIZA. (*Hotly*) You old—clam!

HOWARD. (*Going to LIZA with a fine show of carelessness*) Now, Miss Stuebbin, aren't you going a bit too fast? Please tell us, if you can, how

you know that a man went to my house and disappeared? Aren't you letting your imagination run wild?

LIZA. Imagination! Lib Stannard was in town that day and she seen him. I saw her last week and she told me what he looked like and how he was dressed and all, and ever since I've been askin' folks about him and he was never seen again anywhere around. Far as anybody knows he never left your house.

HOWARD. But aren't you getting things rather mixed? If he never left my house, how could Mr. Westervelt be telegraphing to him?

LIZA. Then who is he telegraphin' to?

HOWARD. That does not concern me, but it does concern me very much that you are making such a serious charge against me. You are accusing me of foul play and (*severely*) unless you can prove what you say, you can be severely punished.

LIZA. (*Defiantly*) I ain't said but what's true. That man went into your house three weeks ago and no one that looks like him has ever come out of it again. There now, *you* prove somethin'! (*Her chin in the air, she strides over to right*)

(*All of the others begin to talk at once.*)

MARGARET.	}	I never heard of such nonsense in all my life!
SUSAN.		This is ridiculous! Why, it couldn't be!
MRS. BERDAN.		I wanter know! Who ever would have thought it!
HEN.		Let's get down to facts! What did he look like?
NANCY.		Oh, dear me! Isn't this dreadful!
AMANDA.		This does beat everythin' I ever knew! I'm all upset!

ENOCH. Don't you believe a word she says. She knows as much about that man as she does about my telgraphin'.

LIZA. I know a good sight more than you think I do. And you'll find out pretty soon that it don't pay to keep your mouth as tight shut as you try to.

(Again they all talk together excitedly.)

MARGARET.	}	The idea of thinking such a
		thing could happen here!
MRS. BERDAN.		My, my, though for all! Don't
		it beat everything!
SUSAN.		Why haven't we heard some-
		thing about this before?
HEN.		What did he look like? I want
		to know what he looked like.
NANCY.	}	Isn't this horrible! I'll have a
		nightmare to-night!
AMANDA.		Lawsy me! I don't see how
		such things can be!
LIZA		I guess I know a thing or two.
		I've got my eyes open if
		nobody else has and I
		know what's goin' on, and
		what I don't know I'm
		goin' to find out about
		I guess I am awake if no
		one else in town is.

ENOCH. *(Walking about with energetic gestures)* Stop! Hush! Stop all talkin' at once! Stop a minute! Stop, I say. Jimminy mustard! STOP!

(Everybody stops suddenly and there is a moment of absolute silence.)

LIZA. *(To ENOCH)* Humph! You most said somethin' that time, didn't you?

HOWARD. If you will excuse me I think I'll go.

(As HOWARD starts to right RUFUS and CINDY come skipping in from down left.)

RUFUS.	}	(Together)	My land o' honey, people, did yo' all hear de news?
CINDY.			
	}		Folkes! Folkes! Did yo' all hear what's hap- pened?

THE OTHERS. Yes, I believe we have!

LIZA. (*Folding her hands complacently*) There ain't nothin' more to tell.

RUFUS.	}	(Joyously)	He's come! He's come! Marse Jim's home!
CINDY.			

ALL. JIM!

QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE:—*The same as in ACT II, but it is evening now and the Chinese lanterns are all hung and lit. AMANDA is heard off right calling RUFUS. She comes in down right, dressed in a light elaborate gown.*

AMANDA. (*Coming in*) Ru-ufus! (*Enter RUFUS from up left, a lighted taper in his hand*) Hurry, Rufus, and get the lanterns lit. The folks may be here any minute.

RUFUS. (*Shambling down*) I'se ahurryin' like a house afire. (*Exit down left*)

(Enter CINDY down right. She is dressed for the evening in a white dress with big red polka-dots in it. Over her arm she carries a white shawl.)

AMANDA. (*Walking about distractedly*) Oh, Cindy, I am just about wild! With what has happened and what may happen I am all of a fluster.

CINDY. (*Crossing to left*) Dat's jest de way wid me. I'se quite discombobulated.

AMANDA. But I'll do my best. That is all that can be asked of me.

CINDY. Dat's right, Miss Mandy.

AMANDA. (*Nervously smoothing her hair and straightening her dress*) Is the lemonade made, and the cake cut, and did the ice-cream come?

CINDY. Yas'm. Yas'm. Yas'm.

AMANDA. (*Sighing*) I don't know how it is, one-half of me is all for lords and ladies and the other half is all for housekeepin'! My! but I'm glad I didn't have to go to Europe, right in preservin' time and all!

CINDY. (*Going up*) Dat's right. I'se kinder mixed in my feelin's myself. (*Dramatically*) Stand back, yo' no account villyan! I s-corn yo', I do!

AMANDA. Mercy! What's the matter?

CINDY. (*Coming down*) Dere ain't nothin' de matter. I'se jest tryin' to sozzle out how I'se goin' to act to-night. (*Taking book from under her shawl*) In dis yhere novel de herowine, when one feller proposes to her, jest lambastes him for fair. "I s-s-scorn yo'," says she. My land o' honey! I'd jest *love* to scorn somebody like dat! But—I'se only got one beau an' if I scorn him too hard he won't come back again. (*Going to AMANDA*) Say, Miss Mandy, I'se jest been kinder wonderin'—ain't dere no black lords and ladies and kings and such like?

AMANDA. Why—er—yes. Out in the Cannibal Islands—or somewhere.

CINDY. (*Skipping about and clapping her hands*) I hab it! I hab it! Rufomeo'll be king and I'll be queen ob de Cannibal Isles!

AMANDA. Sakes' alive! Do stop carryin' on. Are the sandwiches made?

CINDY. (*Dancing over to left*) Maybe dey is, maybe dey ain't. I'se gwine up in society, too! I'se gwine to find some romance, too!

AMANDA. Cindy, the sandwiches——

CINDY. (*Vaguely, going to right*) Oh, yas'm—de sandwiches. I'll kinder look after 'em, Miss Mandy. (*Exit down right*)

AMANDA. If I only dared I'd act like that, too. Lady Amanda! Think of it! (*Exit down right*)

(*Enter HOWARD from left.*)

HOWARD. (*Coming forward*) I wonder if she will come. If I could only have kept Jim away for a while! Still, if I can get Margaret's promise to-night it is as good as gold. And I have her aunt on my side. (*Enter RUFUS up left, waving his taper and singing*) Well, you seem happy to-night.

RUFUS. (*Coming down*) Cracky though! Dat yo', Marse Howard?

HOWARD. It surely is. Did you give Miss Margaret my note?

RUFUS. Yop, I sho' did.

HOWARD. And what did she say?

RUFUS. (*Down center scratching his head*) I jest disremember what she say, but I kinder think—er——

HOWARD. (*Eagerly*) That she will come?

RUFUS. (*Catching gladly at the idea*) Um—m—m. Yes, I reckon dat's what I think.

HOWARD. Did she tell you that she would meet me here to-night before the others came?

RUFUS. You'd be kinder disapinted if she didn't, wouldn't yo'?

HOWARD. I certainly would.

RUFUS. (*Going up*) Well, Miss Margaret ain't no hand to disapint folks.

HOWARD. (*Holding his watch close to a lantern down right*) She ought to be here soon. (*Snapping his watch shut*) How glad I'll be to get out of this miserable hole in the woods! (*Walking about restlessly*) What a fool I was to meddle with Enoch Westervelt's money! But I needed it just then to tide me over a rough spot. And I have crawled out of tighter places! (*Exit at left*)

(*Enter CINDY down right. The shawl is now draped over her head and shoulders.*)

CINDY. (*Crossing to left*) An' he ain't come yet! Dat good fo' nothin' villyan! I'se goin' to scorn him all right. Jest yo' wait! An' me all fixed up like de picture in de book! (*Coming down center*) I'se gwine to stand like she stands too. (*Posing down center*) Oh, beautiful night!

(*Enter HOWARD from left.*)

HOWARD. Ah! She is here! (*He comes quickly and quietly down behind CINDY and throws his arms about her*) I knew you'd come!

(*CINDY screams and breaks away from him and then turns back fiercely.*)

CINDY. What yo' all mean?

HOWARD. Great Scott!

CINDY. (*Vehemently*) Stand back, yo' villyan! Don' yo' touch me! I s-s-scorn yo', I do. Don' yo' talk to me!

HOWARD. (*Backing up as CINDY approaches*) I won't. I don't want to.

CINDY. (*Following him up*) Yo' ain't got no more place in my 'fections dan a—frog! Don't yo' talk to me!

HOWARD. (*Retreating*) I don't want to. Believe me—I—I—I——

CINDY. (*Going after him fiercely*) I won't believe nothin' yo' say. Don' yo' come 'round here wid yo' stories! Yo' pestiferous villyan! Now yo' git. Sho! (*She runs after him and chases him out up right*) Villyan! (*Turning and coming down with great satisfaction*) Well now, I s-s-scornd somebody!

(*Enter AMANDA down right followed by MARGARET.*)

AMANDA. Cindy, you out here!

CINDY. Yas'm, yas'm, Miss Mandy, but I'se agwine right up to de kitchen now and look after dem sandwiches. (*Exit CINDY down right*)

MARGARET. (*Coming in*) Auntie, just a minute. I must speak to you.

AMANDA. Speak out then. I hear folks coming.

MARGARET. (*Going to her*) Jim will be here to-night.

AMANDA. (*Turning away*) If he comes he will have more courage than most folks.

MARGARET. You don't still believe those foolish stories about him, do you?

AMANDA. (*Going to left*) There is nothing else to believe. Nobody but him knew where Enoch kept his money, so nobody but him could have taken it.

MARGARET. (*Following her*) Oh, please!

AMANDA. Well, I don't see what else there is to

be said about it. And if he comes here to-night I don't mean to ask him to stay.

MARGARET. Oh, how can you!

AMANDA. (*Coming back to center*) That's just what I say—how can I when we have nobility in the party and me goin' to marry a——

MARGARET. (*Delighted*) Marry! You going to be married!

AMANDA. (*In dismay*) My land o' Goshen! What have I said!

MARGARET. (*Giving her a hug*) Oh, Auntie, are you going to marry Mr. Westervelt?

AMANDA. (*Shaking herself free*) Sakes' alive! How we talk! I guess I've got marryin' on the brain. Now, Margaret, don't you think about what I said—at least not yet a while. Mercy on us! I'm so upset I can't trust myself to talk any more. And here come the folks! (*Enter MRS. BERDAN and NANCY followed by HEN and ENOCH*) Howd'y do! Good-evening! Glad to see you.

ALL. (*Exchanging greetings*) Good-evening! Howd'y do! etc.

NANCY. Are we the first ones? (*She and HEN go to MARGARET and talk*)

MRS. BERDAN. (*Gazing about*) My! How pretty you've got it fixed!

ENOCH. (*Going to AMANDA*) What sort of a party is this going to be, Amanda, a real folksy one, or will we all have to sit up for shapes?

AMANDA. (*Stiffly*) I hope you will remember that a lord and his folks are present.

ENOCH. (*Walking sadly to left*) I wish I could forget it! Ain't he ever goin' home?

(*Music is heard back in the garden.*)

MRS. BERDAN. (*Going up and looking around*) I wanter know! Music playin' in the back yard! Where have you got it hid?

NANCY. Let's go find it? (*She goes up followed by HEN*)

(*ENOCH steps up to MARGARET and they stand talking earnestly. SUSAN and KEZIA come in down right.*)

ALL. (*Exchanging greetings*) How'dy do! How are you? Etc.

KEZIE. (*Crossing to left*) Well, I come after all. Lawn parties ain't much in my line, but something always happens when I stay away and I don't like to miss anything.

MRS. BERDAN. 'Specially now. (*Throwing up her hands*) My lands! how folks is talkin'! Just since this afternoon what folks haven't said!

KEZIA. (*Coming back to center and looking off right*) Here comes Liza hurryin' for all she's worth.

AMANDA. (*Going nervously to left*) I hope she hasn't found out!

ENOCH. (*Going to her*) Found out what, Amanda?

AMANDA. (*Turning back*) Nothin', Enoch, nothin'. I'm all upset. I've had too many parties, I guess.

(*HEN and NANCY come back.*)

MARGARET. (*Looking off right*) And here comes Howard behind Liza. He seems to be in a hurry too.

(*Enter LIZA hurriedly down right.*)

LIZA. (*Rushing in greatly excited*) *He's gone!*

ALL. Who? What!

LIZA. Cleared out, every hide and hair of him!

ALL. Who? Mercy! Lawsy me! Etc.

(Enter HOWARD down right.)

HOWARD. (*Hurriedly to LIZA*) If you will allow me——

LIZA. (*Shaking him off and going to center*) Without a word to any one. Just picked up and walked off. Must have been some good reason for it, I say. Folks don't go slidin' off that way unless they've got somethin' to hide.

HOWARD. (*Going over to her*) If you will allow me——

LIZA. (*Turning on him*) Oh, you needn't talk. It don't look none too good for you, either. It's out of your house he went, and he's the second man. Now what do you suppose made him go?

AMANDA. (*Going to her*) Liza, hush. Who's gone?

HOWARD. Let me tell you. It is my affair.

LIZA. It is Sir Clement.

ALL. (*Except HOWARD and LIZA*) Sir Clement!

LIZA. Every hide and hair of him. Without sayin' a word to anyone. Must have been pretty much ashamed of himself not to say good-bye.

SUSAN. (*Hotly*) Ashamed of himself! Sir Clement ashamed of himself. The idea of your saying a thing like that! I should think that *you* would be ashamed of talking the way you do. No one can come into the town without your having something dreadful to say about them. And you tell a dozen different stories about the same person in the same breath.

ENOCH. (*Laying his hand on her arm*) Gently, gently.

SUSAN. Well, it is true. She doesn't need even the shadow of a fact to start her off. (*She goes up right*)

HOWARD. (*Solemnly*) Friends, I am very sorry to have to tell you that this time Miss Stuebbin is right.

(SUSAN turns back.)

ALL. (*Except LIZA, who is more astonished, however, than any of the others*) Right!

HOWARD. Yes, it grieves me very much, but Sir Clement was ashamed of himself. (*He stands meekly at center*)

ALL. (*Except LIZA and HOWARD*) Ashamed!

HOWARD. And I am ashamed of myself too, because——

ALL. You!

HOWARD. I know that I should have given you some hint, some warning, but it was a hard thing to do and I wanted to give him another chance. You see, he had been doing things in England—things that made it seem—er—better for him to leave the country. But he appeared to be sorry and I gave him another chance, and the first day he came here—I have just found it out myself——

ALL. What?

HOWARD. He robbed Mr. Westervelt.

(*The following eight speeches come in quick succession.*)

MRS. BERDAN. I wanter know!

LIZA. Well, I never!

AMANDA. It can't be true!

NANCY. Sir Clement! Why, he is a lord!

HEN. Jumpin' ginger!

MARGARET. Oh, I hope it isn't true!

ENOCH. Well, I snum!

KEZIA. What next!

AMANDA. (*Dropping down on bench at left*)
I jest can't sense it all!

SUSAN. (*Down right*) I don't believe it. You can't make me believe it.

ENOCH. (*Stepping to center*) He couldn't have

done it. He was here at the strawberry festival when it was taken.

HOWARD. He was here when you discovered that it was taken, but he took it on his way here, before I saw him.

SUSAN. (*Crossing to left*) I don't believe it. You can't make me believe it.

LIZA. Nobody's goin' to try. We're just goin' to put the constable on his track, that's all.

HOWARD. I hope you will not think that necessary, Mr. Westervelt. It would cause a great deal of unpleasant notoriety for us all, and I will gladly return the money.

LIZA. And let him go scott free!

MRS. BERDAN. I wanter know!

AMANDA. (*Holding her head*) I feel like a beaten biscuit.

MARGARET. (*To ENOCH*) I hope you will settle it that way.

ENOCH. (*Shaking his head sadly*) I don't care about the money. I guess I'll never have a chance to use it the way I wanted to. And besides, I don't see why Howard should pay for what his cousin does wrong.

HOWARD. (*Taking out his check-book*) I feel responsible for him. He was not only my guest, but I knew something of his habits too.

ENOCH. But you say he did it before you saw him.

HOWARD. (*Handing check to ENOCH*) Please, Mr. Westervelt, let me do this. It is the easiest way to close this very unpleasant matter.

(*ENOCH turns away shaking his head, so SUSAN takes the check from HOWARD just as CLEM comes in from rear.*)

HOWARD. (*In a sudden panic*) Clem!

THE OTHERS. Sir Clement!

CLEM. (*Coming down*) Please don't.

HOWARD. (*Putting on a brave front and stepping up to CLEM*) How do you dare to come back here!

CLEM. It did take some nerve, but I made up my mind to face the music.

HOWARD. It was not necessary. I have explained and the best thing for you to do is to go as quickly as possible. (*Trying to urge him off*) Come. Every one is willing that you should go without further comment.

LIZA. (*Going toward CLEM*) Oh, no! There is goin' to be plenty more said about it, and I'm goin' to begin by tellin' you right now that you are the first thief that has ever been in Reedville.

CLEM. Thief!

SUSAN. (*Stepping to CLEM's side*) I know it is not true.

CLEM. It most certainly is not true. I have never stolen a thing in my life.

HOWARD. (*Anxiously*) Come. The least said the better. You'll only make things worse for yourself.

CLEM. (*Shaking HOWARD off*) I have come here to say something and I am not going until it is said. You may go if you choose. I am going to tell everything and you will probably not enjoy it.

HOWARD. Pray don't make a scene.

AMANDA. (*Rising*) Sir Clement—

CLEM. (*Down center*) I am not Sir Clement. I have never been in England and I am not Howard Vanter's cousin. My name is Clement Wicks and I came out here to claim from Vanter what I considered he owed me—a simple living. Between us we decided that it would be a good joke to pass myself off as his cousin, Sir Clement Blackwell. (*HOWARD slips out unnoticed*) That is what I came back to tell you. That is what I was trying to tell

you this afternoon, Miss Armen. And, after what happened, I simply couldn't leave until you understood, so I have come——

SUSAN. (*Interrupting*) What about the money?

CLEM. Money? I don't know much about money. Haven't seen much for the past two years.

SUSAN. But Mr. Westervelt's——

ENOCH. Where were you when my money was taken?

CLEM. As nearly as I can figure it out I must have been in Vanter's room getting into *Sir Clement's* clothes. I came here in rags and he sent me to his rooms to dress in the best I could find.

MRS. BERDAN. I wanter know!

(*Enter JIM from rear.*)

LIZA. I'd like to know how you're goin' to prove it.

JIM. (*Coming down*) Clem Wicks! So it was you after all!

ALL. Jim!

(*AMANDA drops back on the bench again.*)

KEZIA. (*Taking a step toward him*) Maybe you're goin' to help us straighten things out.

MRS. BERDAN. We're in the greatest mixup!

NANCY. Just one excitement after another!

LIZA. (*Going to JIM*) If you didn't take Enoch's money, I wanter know who did.

JIM. What is all this? I don't understand.

MARGARET. (*Going to him*) Oh, Jim, it has been dreadful!

LIZA. (*Nudging JIM impatiently*) Enoch Westervelt was robbed the day you left and a man went into Howard Vanter's and nothing's been seen of him since and I wanter know all about it.

JIM. Mr. Wicks went into Howards the day I left. I saw him as I ran for my train.

CLEM. He came out, Sir Clement.

(*Enter RUFUS and CINDY from right.*)

RUFUS. Marse Jim! I swan to gracious if it ain't!

LIZA. I wanter know who took that money. (*To JIM*) If it wasn't you (*To CLEM*) or you, who was it? Somebody went into Enoch's house while we was all here at the strawberry festival and I am goin' to find out who it was.

RUFUS. (*Scratching his head*) Jest lemme sozzle dat out. Ebberybody was yhere.

LIZA. No. (*Pointing to CLEM*) He says he was at Howard's and Jim says he was running for his train.

RUFUS. An' Marse Howard?

ALL. (*Except JIM, CLEM, and RUFUS*) Was here.

RUFUS. Yhere?

THE OTHERS. Of course.

RUFUS. Den it must hab been one ob de ladies.

THE OTHERS. (*Shocked*) What do you mean?

RUFUS. Nobody but Marse Howard an' de ladies was wearin' white clothes dat day, an' when I went back fo' dat extra cake Miss Susan baked I seen somebody in white hidin' in de bushes close to Marse Westervelt's house.

THE OTHERS. And you never told!

RUFUS. Well, dat Cindy do git so raspy at me I clean fo'got de minute she yelled to hurry up.

SUSAN. (*Handing ENOCH the check*) Get it cashed the first thing in the morning. (*She goes back to CLEM*)

NANCY. But it couldn't be Howard!

AMANDA. With all his manners!

KEZIA. And money.

HEN. Where is he?

ALL. (*Looking about*) Gone!

ENOCH. And so at last we are through with all the shams!

AMANDA. (*Jumping up*) I am, anyway.

NANCY. And I.

AMANDA. Titles and ornaments are all right in their way but we shouldn't forget the material they're fastened to. I see now what you mean, Enoch. (*Going to him and holding out her hand*) Any genuine thing is good.

ENOCH. (*Clasping her hand*) I knew you'd wake up.

MARGARET. (*Anxiously going toward AMANDA*) Auntie——

AMANDA. Yes, you can marry Jim if you want to, or anybody else as good. (*JIM steps to MARGARET'S side*)

NANCY. (*Slipping her hand through HEN'S arm*) And I guess I will be plain Mrs. Bush.

CINDY. (*Coming down right*) Is de Cannibal Isles far from yhere?

THE OTHERS. Oh, yes.

CINDY. (*Shaking her head decidedly*) Well, I reckon I won't be dere queen nohow. Dere's too much oncertainness in high society, and I'se gwine to stick to housekeepin' and Rufus Green.

(*RUFUS follows her down and she takes his hand.*)

AMANDA. (*At center with ENOCH*) And so our romance huntin' ends—like most good things——

ALL. At home.

CURTAIN.



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